



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

1400 South 19th
Bozeman, MT 59718

September 28, 2001

To: Governor's Office, Todd O'Hair, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office
Wildlife Division
Legal Unit

Parks Division
Lands Section
FWP Commissioners

Fisheries Division
Design & Construction Bureau
Dennis Flath

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1201
Montana State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103
Montana State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Avenue, P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624
Gallatin County Commissioners, Gallatin County Courthouse, 311 West Main, Bozeman, MT 59715
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771-1571
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923
Glenn Hockett, Gallatin Wildlife Association, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715
Bob Raney, 212 So. 6th, Livingston, MT 59047
Skyline Sportsmen's Assoc., P.O. Box 173, Butte, MT 59701
Anaconda Sportsman's Club, #2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711
Jefferson Valley Sportsman's Assoc., P.O. Box 663, Whitehall, MT 59759
Prickly Pear Sportsman's Assoc., 1721 Virginia Dale St., Helena, MT 59601
Tom Sather, Headwaters Fish & Game Association, P.O. Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941
Perry Backus, 65 Redtail, Dillon, MT 59725
John Gatchell, Montana Wilderness Association, P.O. Box 635, Helena, MT 59624
William Fairhurst, Public Lands Access Association, P.O. Box 247, Three Forks, MT 59752
Jack Atcheson, State Lands Coalition, 3210 Ottawa Street, Butte, MT 59701
Ponderosa Pines Ranch, 12452 Clarkston Rd., Three Forks, MT 59752
Terry Wubben, 6010 Pearl Drive, Amsterdam, MT 59741

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Fairweather Fishing Access Site Improvement Project.

The comment period will be from September 28, 2001 until 5:00 p.m. October 29, 2001. Please send any comments you may have to: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Fairweather FAS Improvements, 1400 So. 19th Avenue, Bozeman, MT 59718, or e-mail tgreason@montana.edu.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Flowers
Regional Supervisor

Enclosure

DRAFT

MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action:

Reroute site access road, parking and turn-around culdesac, install gravel boat ramp and latrine.

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:

The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, which directs Fish, Wildlife & Parks to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing access sites. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to ensure that this function would be accomplished.

3. Name of Project:

Fairweather Fishing Access Facility Relocation and Development

4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency):

Sponsored by Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

5. If Applicable:

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date Spring 2002

Estimated Completion Date Spring 2002

Current Status of Project Design (% complete) 25%

6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township):

The Fairweather Fishing Access Area (FAA) can be reached by traveling northeast on the Trident Road approximately 8 miles from the Interstate 90 frontage road (through Missouri Headwaters State Park) to the Clarkston Road, then about 8 miles to the FAA; Gallatin County, Township 3 North, Range 2 East; project will occur in Section 12. Total FAA is 719.18 acres.

7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (a) Developed:
residential..... <u> </u> acres
industrial <u> </u> acres | (d) Floodplain <u> </u> acres |
| (b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation <u>2.5</u> acres | (e) Productive:
irrigated cropland..... <u> </u> acres
dry cropland <u>≤1</u> acres
forestry <u> </u> acres
rangeland..... <u> </u> acres
other..... <u> </u> acres |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas <u> </u> acres | |

Note that about 0.6 acres of crop land will be used for construction of the new access road; however, about 0.3 acres will be returned to crop land when the old road is reclaimed, resulting in a net loss of only 0.3 acres crop land. This land is in a cooperative use (cost share) program between FWP and a private farmer to enhance wildlife habitat.

8. **Map/site plan:** attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

Please refer to Appendices 2-4.

9. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

The Fairweather Fishing Access Area (FAA) is a public boat launching site on the Missouri River about half way between the Missouri Headwaters State Park launch site, about 10 miles upstream, and a Bureau of Land Management launch downstream about 10 river miles, immediately upstream of Toston Dam.

Fairweather FAA had a gravel boat ramp until about 1992 when flooding and ice gouging destroyed the ramp. In 1994, a concrete matt ramp was installed; however, this was also damaged by flooding and ice build up and was removed in about 1997. River dynamics have caused major erosion at the old ramp site and existing roads are unsafe due to the proximity to the riverbank.

FAA users have contacted the Bozeman FWP Office requesting a boat ramp at this site for several years. The site received approximately 6,800 visitors in 2000, compared to about 7,400 visitors in 1997. This decline in visitation is attributed to lack of a public launch area. Without a launch/take-out site in this location, the distance between the Missouri Headwaters and Toston Dam is too lengthy for most boaters. Motorized and non-motorized boaters use this river access for fishing, waterfowl hunting, wildlife watching, and general recreation.

A new ramp location has been selected approximately 400 feet downstream from the previous launch site. The river flow currently shifts away from the selected bank in a manner that will shelter the new gravel and preferably cable matt ramp (depending on funding). This new location will require a rerouting of the access road within the FAA, though access into the FAA from the Clarkston County Road will remain at the same location. Approximately 2,000 feet of the existing road will be used. The remaining old road will be reclaimed and gravel used on the new route. The new 16-foot-wide road will be approximately 2,400 feet long and have one passing area and a small parking area before reaching a cul de sac for turn around and parking. The cul de sac will aid in easy and efficient boat launching and parking for vehicles with trailers. A latrine will aid in sanitation.

Approximately two-thirds of the new road will be built over land that is under a ten-year cost share program for agricultural use and wildlife enhancement. The remaining road and cul de sac will pass through an established riparian area. Topsoil from construction of the new road will be stockpiled to use in reclaiming the old roads to the full extent that funding allows. Old road reclamation will eliminate traffic on roads, which have become unsafe due to erosion, and curtail access and use of pioneered roads through the riparian area.

10. **Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

- (a) **Permits:** all permits will be filed by FWP or the contractor 3-4 weeks prior to construction.

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
FWP	124 Permit	
Army Corps of Engineers	404 Fill Permit	
Gallatin County Sanitarian	Floodplain sealed vault septic system permit	
DNRC – Gallatin County	Floodplain construction permit	
Gallatin County	Weed Permit	

(b) **Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Fish, Wildlife & Parks	
Boat-in-Lieu	\$50,000
Boat-in-Lieu (tentative, applied for)	\$25,000
TOTAL	\$75,000

(c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Cultural Clearance

11. **List of Agencies Consulted during Preparation of the EA:**

FWP:

- Parks Division
- Fisheries Division
- Wildlife Division
- Design and Construction
- Nongame (TES) Species Coordinator

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

SHPO

Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resource Information System)

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		yes	1b.
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		yes	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other: ___ N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. The proposed new road and boat ramp will not cause soil instability. These actions will be surface alterations, and will not alter the geologic substructure. The current river flow does not vigorously work on the bank at the proposed boat ramp site.

1b. The new road will follow the edge of a grain field owned by FWP and leased to a local farmer under a 10-year cost share program to enhance wildlife habitat. Construction will result in about 0.6 acres of new road over agricultural land, and about 0.3 acres of old road will be returned to agricultural land, for a net decrease of 0.3 acres in productive agricultural land due to road construction. Remaining road construction will disrupt approximately 2.4 acres in the riparian zone. This is considered a minor impact since the entire fishing access area is over 719 acres and it provides large areas of protected habitat. The project is confined to an area already impacted by pioneered travel, with the intent of reducing further unrestricted travel impacts to the area. Construction equipment and ground disturbance will be limited to the immediate area as per standard FWP contract agreements.

1c. Unique geologic or physical features are not present within the construction area.

1d. Construction of the boat ramp will be the only shoreline modification in this project. The bank will be cut and sloped away from the river to provide a gentle slope to launch a boat. Cable matt may be placed on the lower ramp to stabilize the ramp area. The ramp site was chosen and the proposed action designed by the FWP Design and Construction Engineering staff and reviewed by the Fisheries Biologist, and is not expected to modify the river channel or create erosion or deposition. A minor amount of siltation is expected temporarily during construction. Temporary erosion controls are standard requirements during construction to reduce siltation and deposition.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-I projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				
f. Other: ____N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Minor and temporary amounts of dust are anticipated due to construction of roads and parking areas. Removal of vegetation surrounding the project will be minimized to limit dust. All disturbed areas will be seeded after project completion to reduce future dust.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. WATER	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		yes	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		yes	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				3d.
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?			X positive			3e.
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-I, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. ***For P-R/D-I, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				
n. Other: ___ N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. The alteration of the bank to provide a boat ramp will cause minor and temporary increases to turbidity levels. Equipment will not enter the water. Other construction impacts will be mitigated by use of temporary erosion controls, revegetation, and the use of Best Management Practices. Dissolved oxygen and temperature levels are not expected to be notably impacted.

3b. Drainage patterns will change slightly due to the road and parking area. These impacts will be limited by the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs), for which FWP is a lead agency in development and use. The use of gravel surfaces and BMP grading will preclude large amounts of runoff, as well. The riparian area has several low areas, which may be flooded during high water episodes or storm events; road culverts will be appropriately sized to allow the river to follow its natural flow and to retain these backwater areas.

3d. The boat ramp will be gravel or cable matt and single-vehicle width, thus no appreciable additional runoff is anticipated from this change in surface. The remaining road and parking area is surrounded by thick vegetation in the riparian area, which will filter and absorb surface runoff. The grain crop and stubble remaining after harvest will also aid in surface runoff absorption.

3e. The existing roads present a hazard to people due to the river changes in the last several years and erosion into the road bed. Because gravel is on these old roads, people tend to find ways around the road block and continue to use these roads. The removal of surface gravel and converting the section of old road into agricultural land will deter people from the use of these unsafe road sections adjacent to the river.

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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. VEGETATION	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
will the proposed action result in:						
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		yes	4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?			X			4a.
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		yes	4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-L, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other: ____N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. As noted above, a net of approximately 0.3 acres of agricultural land will be converted into road to enter the new launch site. This land is owned by FWP and leased for farming in an effort to provide habitat and forage opportunities for upland and migratory birds and wildlife. The riparian area will be impacted, to a minor degree, in relation to the 719 acres that are protected as part of the Fishing Access Area. The road will require the removal of species such as common grasses, snow berry, wild rose, willow, a few small ponderosa pines (6-8 feet tall), and a few junipers. The project location was selected in an effort to limit impacts to the vegetation and critical wildlife habitat. FWP contracts require construction to be contained to the immediate area, thus limiting the impacts on surrounding vegetation.

4b. The riparian community will be altered somewhat by the new road; however, by eliminating access to the pioneered roads throughout the riparian zone, these areas will revegetate. The new road and parking areas are located in open areas. Tree retention is a priority.

4e. Red cocklebur, common tansy, spotted knapweed and Canada thistle occur on the site. Areas disturbed by construction will be prone to the establishment of noxious weeds. All disturbed areas will be seeded with mixed grass immediately after construction to reduce the possibility of weeds becoming established. FWP Region 3 will monitor disturbed areas until adequate ground cover has returned and regularly thereafter, in accordance with the revised Region 3 Weed Management Plan, and Gallatin County Weed Board.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comm. Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?			X		yes	5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X		yes	5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?			X		yes	5e.
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		yes	5g.
h. ***For P-R/D-I, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. ***For P-R/D-I, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				
j. Other: _____ N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish/Wildlife (attach additional pages of narra* if needed):

Ron Spoon, FWP Fisheries Biologist, reviewed the plans and spoke with Sue Dalbey on August 9, 2001, about the fish species found in this reach of the Missouri River. The primary game species here include brown trout and rainbow trout, a few northern pike and mountain white fish. Arctic grayling were reintroduced in 2000 by plants in the river near Missouri Headwaters State Park. Native species found in these waters include long nose suckers and white suckers. Carp and dace along with other minnow species also inhabit these waters. Spoon indicated that enhancing access to the river would increase the amount of access to the game fish species with few impacts to populations, and is a positive impact for anglers. With proper construction design of the new facilities they will have little impact to the fisheries. The new ramp will be at a more stable location and less erosive. The inclusion of an access site in this location is important for motorized and non-motorized boaters, and it coordinates with the fishing access site program concept of access every 5-10 miles or 4-5 floating hours.

FWP Wildlife Biologist Kurt Alt affirmed to Sue Dalbey on August 13, 2001, that this site is important to upland game birds and habitat is being enhanced through the implementation of a cost share farming project which leaves strips of grain standing for habitat and forage. The riparian zone is used by white-tail deer, and various common nongame species such as raccoon, skunk, beaver.

A data search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified the bald eagle as the only species of concern in the area. Dennis Flath, FWP Nongame Coordinator, confirmed a nesting site south of the project area, but does not foresee construction to be detrimental to the eagle since the sites are nearly 1½ miles from each other. Flath also noted that this area could provide habitat for the Northern Leopard frog, which is a species of concern in Montana. Common garter snakes and boreal toads may also be found in this area; therefore, he stressed the importance of maintaining backwater areas.

5a. The new road construction will eliminate virgin riparian growth for a total of about 2.4 acres. This is considered important wildlife habitat; however, the old use area will be reclaimed to replace this riparian area. Site use will be shifted within the fishing access area; however the use will remain the same. As previously noted, the project location was selected in an effort to limit impacts to the vegetation and critical wildlife

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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habitat. FWP contracts require construction to be contained to the immediate area, thus limiting the area impacts.

5. The FWP Nongame Coordinator and FWP Fisheries Biologist indicated the importance of maintaining the backwater areas when water events are needed, and the use of appropriately sized road culverts will accommodate these concerns for river flows and habitat retention. Some small nongame species, such as mice and song birds will be displaced by the new construction and visitation in this area; however, these species will be somewhat able to shift their use to the previous use area which will now be closed to traffic.

5e. Construction of the new road within the agricultural area may reduce the effects of the habitat enhancement program for game birds. The road will separate the grain field from the island of brush habitat for a short distance, which will limit the cover for birds trying to forage on the grain. This may be mitigated by leaving larger strips of grain in other areas of the fields to accommodate larger numbers of birds in these areas.

5f. As stated above, the bald eagle is the only species of concern identified in the area and will not be impacted by the proposed project. Though Flath noted that the area may provide habitat for the Northern Leopard frog, the species has not been found here.

5g. Fisheries Biologist Ron Spoon affirmed that the installation of a boat ramp will increase angler pressure and fish harvest; however, he does not foresee this as a notable loss to the fishery.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a.
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				6b.
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: <u> N/A </u>						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. A minor increase in noise levels will occur during construction due to the use of large equipment such as graders, dump trucks, loaders, etc. The construction will be at least a quarter mile away from the nearest homes and 90 days will be allowed for construction to be completed. The installation of a boat ramp will increase motorboat noise relative to the last three years; however, prior to the flooding and eradication of the old ramp, motorboats and the associated noise were common. The proposed project is not expected to greatly increase the historical use by motorboaters.

6b. Motorboat noise is not considered a nuisance in this location due to the linear nature and large size of the FAA, as well as the heavily vegetated buffer zone along the river. Local residents are over half a mile from the river.

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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X		yes	7a.
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				7b.
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: <u>N/A</u>						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. The agricultural land will be reduced by approximately 0.3 acres which will slightly reduce harvest profits. The benefits of reconstructing a public access to the river is a positive opportunity for human use of the land for recreational use, hunting and fishing. These activities also bring economic benefits to surrounding communities when recreationists buy gas, food, lodging, tackle and equipment for their activities. Individually, there may be a slight loss in harvest profit; however, cumulatively there may be an equal gain in the area economy.

7b. This section of the Missouri River is part of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. It is open to motorboats, but not personal watercraft.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X positive			8c.
d. ***For P-R/D-I, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a.)		N/A				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a. The FWP Region 3 Weed Management Plan calls for an integrated method of managing weeds, including the use of herbicides. The use of weed controlling chemicals will be in compliance with application guidelines and by people trained in safe handling techniques to limit the possibility of an accident.

8c. The objective of this project is to remove a hazardous road, which the Missouri River continues to erode, in addition to providing a designated launch site in a relatively stable section of the river.

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HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?			X		yes	9a.
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X positive			9e.
f. Other: <u> N/A </u>						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9a. Visitation is expected to increase slightly compared to the last few years when no boat launch was available. In 2000, visitation was estimated at 6,800, compared to approximately 7,400 in 1997 when boaters recently could launch at the site. Visitation estimates are not available prior to 1997. The amount of increased visitation is not expected to significantly alter the site resources, and the proposed improvements will help protect the site from indiscriminate dispersed use. In addition, access to this site will disperse use on the river, alleviating possible crowding issues at sites up and downstream.

9e. The proposed project will not significantly impact traffic patterns or routes outside of the Fishing Access Area since visitation will remain at 1 similar to the last five years; however, traffic patterns and safety will improve within the site. Flooding and ice build-up in the past has encroached the existing road facilities, making it especially difficult for vehicles pulling boat trailers to maneuver and park on designated routes. The road reroute and parking areas will provide efficient ingress/egress and parking for all vehicles, including those with trailers and launching boats.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: <u>sewage disposal</u>			X		yes	10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources.						10e.
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other: <u>N/A</u>						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10a. The new roads will not require more maintenance than what was required in the past; however, the addition of a latrine will require a small amount of additional maintenance. Cleaning will be conducted by a FWP fishing access site caretaker; vault pumping will be done under contract approximately one time annually or as use necessitates. Both actions are typical of fishing access sites in Region 3. Visitors are asked to pack out garbage. Often, new improvements require less maintenance than dilapidated facilities to protect the site and provide visitor safety.

10e. No revenue will be collected at the site. Revenue to complete the project is outlined on page 3, #10b. Funding. State boat-in-lieu of taxes funds will be used. These are user fees from the purchase of motorboat licensing fees. A total of \$75,000 is anticipated to complete the project.

10f. Approximately \$500-800 will be budgeted from the state motorboat fishing access site funds to cover annual maintenance costs at the site. Maintenance tasks will include litter pick-up, latrine cleaning, fencing, miscellaneous vandalism repair, and road grading as needed.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X positive			11c.
d. ***For P-R/D-I, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				
e. Other: ___N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed site development will not differ greatly from what exists. Riparian growth will shelter the new latrine from view of river and county road travelers, as well as neighbors. The latrine has a natural aggregate finish to help it blend with the environment. Other proposed improvements are of low elevation and not significantly noticeable. Existing roads will be reclaimed.

11c. The proposed improvements provide additional recreational opportunities for boaters and anglers by providing a boat ramp. The quality of these opportunities is increased by the ease of travel, access, and parking to reach the recreation destination. Please refer to Appendix 4 to review the Tourism Report from the Department of Commerce.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-I, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				12a.
e. Other: ___N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. A cultural resource inventory was conducted at this site, which concluded that the project will have a low likelihood of impacting any known cultural resources. The State Historic Preservation Office agreed with this conclusion, as seen in Appendix 5 with their stamp of concurrence.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total..)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-I, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. ****For P-R/D-I, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action, whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider, and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

ALTERNATIVE 1. NO ACTION.

If no action is taken at this site, it will continue to degrade from vehicles using undesignated routes and from the erosion of roads by the natural river dynamics. The site has value to bank anglers, waterfowl and deer hunters, and general recreationists, but motorboat access is non-existent. A carry-in launch would be difficult due to the bank heights. The existing road basically deadends where the river has eroded it; parking is limited, and there is no designated turn-around area. This lack of site definition/design results in mass damage to vegetation and site degradation. Costs for this option would be limited to permanently blocking off the existing road to prevent vehicles from driving on the eroding roads by the river and protect public safety. FWP Region 3 Parks staff could complete this.

ALTERNATIVE 2. CHANGE SITE TO A WALK-IN AREA ONLY.

This alternative would provide a parking area close to the entrance near the county road. Boaters would likely not use the site due to the distance from the river to carry a vessel. Angler use would likely drop for the same reasons. Future motorboat access would be eliminated. Hunting for upland bird and waterfowl species and whitetail deer may increase due to the decrease in human activity at the site, thus an increased use by wildlife. The site would continue to be farmed for agricultural use. This alternative would leave the riparian area in its existing state, and would inhibit use of pioneered roads in this area. This alternative would be an inexpensive option as there is open area near an old building just west of the railroad tracks to provide parking. Fencing or other barriers would be erected to limit vehicles past this point. Negative public comments would be expected in response to use limitations of this site. FWP Parks staff could complete the fencing and signing needed to notify the public of the change in site use.

ALTERNATIVE 3. REBUILD THE BOAT RAMP AT THE ORIGINAL SITE OR UPSTREAM OF THAT SITE.

The FWP Design and Construction engineers reviewed aerial photos of the river to determine the most long lasting location for a new boat ramp. The flood events of the last ten years have changed the river channel, forcing the water to erode the bank at the site of the original boat ramp, thus making it a poor choice for a lasting ramp and for safe launching. Sites up river would require more difficult and expensive access roads due to a slough crossing. This project would be completed by contracted services.

ALTERNATIVE 4. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (PROPOSED ACTION): REROUTE ACCESS ROAD TO NEW, DOWNSTREAM BOAT RAMP WITH CUL DE SAC AND PARKING AS DESCRIBED.

Redesign of the site as described provides access for motorized and non-motorized boaters, and spreads use along the river to limit boater conflicts. This is also a desired floating distance from the ramp sites up and downstream. The boat ramp location is expected to endure typical river flows for many years. The road reroute utilizes previously disturbed agricultural land. The cul de sac allows for easy ramp access and parking for vehicles with and without trailers. Using gravel from the old road will help obliterate that access route, as well as incorporate it into the adjacent agricultural field. In addition, topsoil from the new road construction will aid in the reclamation of old roads. Removing traffic from this end of the riparian zone will allow pioneered roads to revegetate. This would be a contracted project.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency.

FWP engineering staff will oversee the completion of the project, thus the contractor will be held to the terms of the project, such as limiting soil and vegetation disturbance to the immediate project area, and seeding disturbed areas to aid in reclamation. DNRC has jurisdiction over construction in the floodplain and the Gallatin County Sanitarian must approve the installation of the sealed vault septic system (latrine).

Stipulations outlined in the 124 Stream Protection Act permit and project review by the FWP Fisheries Biologist will require the contractor to use erosion controls to limit siltation, deposition, or changes to the river channel. FWP engineering staff designed this project using Best Management Practices, which will limit changes in surface water runoff or drainage patterns.

Noxious weeds will be monitored by FWP after completion and controlled in accordance with methods outlined in the revised Region 3 Weed Management Plan and the Gallatin County Weed Board.

FWP designed the project to maintain critical vegetation for riparian wildlife habitat and yet provide a stable ramp and efficient site use. Existing roads will be reclaimed to replace agricultural land used in the new project. The cost-share farming project will continue to provide upland bird habitat, but locations of unharvested strips may need to be revised to provide the highest wildlife benefits. Human use of the fishing access area will not change except in location; however, the project will cause wildlife to shift their use within the access area.

Increased river access will provide more angler pressure, but angler access is a goal of the Fisheries Division and not a detriment to the fisheries in this case.

The slight loss in profitability from farming this area is expected to shift to an increase in profitability for service providers in the form of recreationists purchasing supplies in nearby communities.

Providing designated routes and limiting access to undesignated routes will help protect the site from the slight increase in human use at this site due to the reopening of river access. In addition, traffic patterns and safety increase by closing the existing eroded routes. Pumping and cleaning of the latrine will be the only added increase in governmental services and this is standard for FWP fishing access sites.

4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

This environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action; therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project, if any. Given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The public will be notified in the following manner to comment on the EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two legal notices in each of these papers: Three Forks Herald, Bozeman Daily Chronicle, Helena Independent Record, Townsend Star;
- One statewide press release.

Copies of the EA will be mailed directly to the neighboring landowners to ensure their knowledge of the proposed action.

The opportunities for public input listed above are appropriate for the proposed actions since few negative environmental impacts are identified.

6. Duration of comment period, if any:

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the second legal notice. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., October 29, 2001, and can be mailed to the address below:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Fairweather FAA
1400 S. 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718
e-mail: tgreason@montana.edu

7. Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:

Sue Dalbey
Independent Contractor
Dalbey Resources
926 N. Lamborn St.
Helena, MT 59601
406-443-8058

Tom Greason
Parks Maintenance Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 S. 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-4042

Jerry Walker
State Parks Region 3 Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 S. 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-4042

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed project returns facilities to the site, which have been missing for several years due to change in the Missouri River flows. The primary purpose for acquiring the Fairweather Fishing Access Area was to create river access. The chosen location for the new access is expected to withstand river flows for an extended period. Existing roads are eroding and unsafe, and currently are blocked to prevent access to the water. Proposed roads will provide easy launching and parking, and reduce the indiscriminate use of undesignated routes in the riparian zone. The added latrine will aid in site sanitation.

Few impacts were identified in this evaluation, and all were minor. The largest concern is from a wildlife perspective. The entire project will result in a loss of only 0.3 acres of agricultural land and about 2.3 acres of riparian. Habitat is enhanced by use of a cost share program with a local farmer to leave some standing grain when harvesting agricultural fields in the FAA property, and this can help in mitigating some of the effects of construction. In addition, the previous use area will be reclaimed and indiscriminant use of undesignated roads will be reduced by removing access to that area. Other potential negative impacts identified, such as increased weeds and water quality during construction, are minor and temporary and can be mitigated through the use of common standard methods including implementation of the FWP Weed Management Plan and erosion controls.

No threatened or endangered species were identified in the immediate area. No unique cultural, geological, or physical features will be affected. Wetlands will not be impacted. The proposed improvements planned for this site will enhance the visitor's recreational opportunities, as well as protect the site from environmental deterioration.

ATTACHMENTS

1. HB495 Qualification Checklist
2. Site Location Map
3. Project Location within Fairweather Fishing Access Area
4. Site Plan
5. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
6. Clearance Letter – State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
7. Building Plans: Latrine

Sed 8/22/01; 9/14/01

APPENDIX 1
HB495
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: August 14, 2001

Person Reviewing: Sue Dalbey, consultant
Dalbey Resources

Project Location: The Fairweather Fishing Access Area (FAA) can be reached by traveling northeast on the Trident Road approximately 8 miles from the Interstate 90 frontage road (through Missouri Headwaters State Park) to the Clarkston Road, then about 8 miles to the FAS; Gallatin County, Township 3 North, Range 2 East; project will occur in Section 12. Total FAA is 719.18 acres.

Description of Proposed Work: Reroute site access road, parking and turn-around culdesac; install gravel boat ramp and latrine.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check ☒ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- ☒ A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: *About 1000 feet of road will be constructed on riparian land.*
- ☐ B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: *Only one pre-built, sealed vault latrines will be installed.*
- ☒ C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: *Construction of the access road, culdesac, latrine, parking and boat ramp will require excavation of more than 20 c.y.*
- ☒ D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: *New parking lots will be constructed to replace areas eroded by the Missouri River.*
- ☐ E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: *New ramp will be single width.*
- ☐ F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: *The new gravel ramp will be provided by excavating the bank to a navigable grade, but construction will not extend into the river.*
- ☐ G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: *A cultural survey revealed a low likelihood of disturbing cultural sites.*

[] H. Any new above ground utility lines?

Comments: *None*

[] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?

Comments: *Camping is not designated at this site, though camping is allowed.*

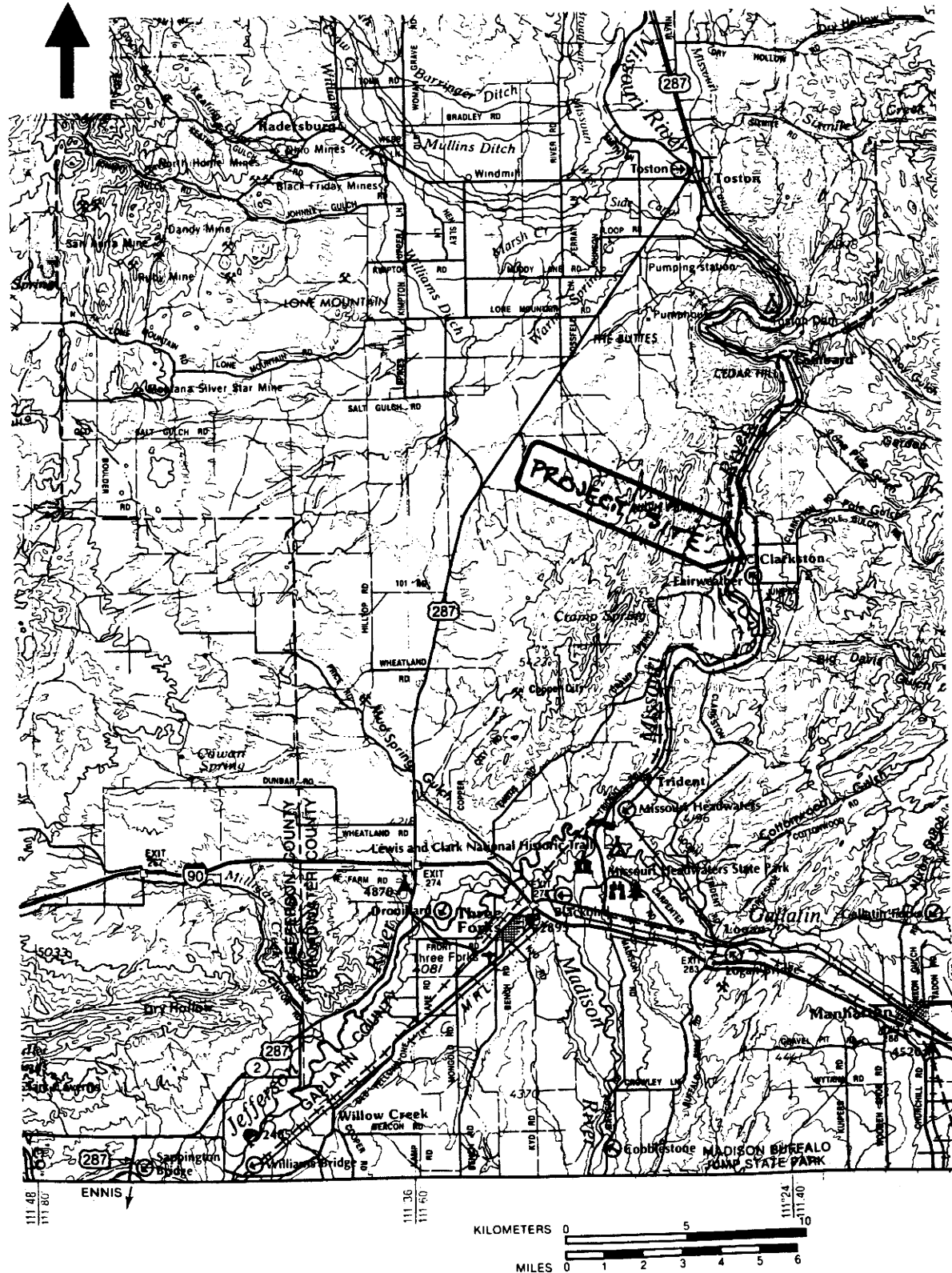
[] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?

Comments: *Use will remain the same as historical use.*

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

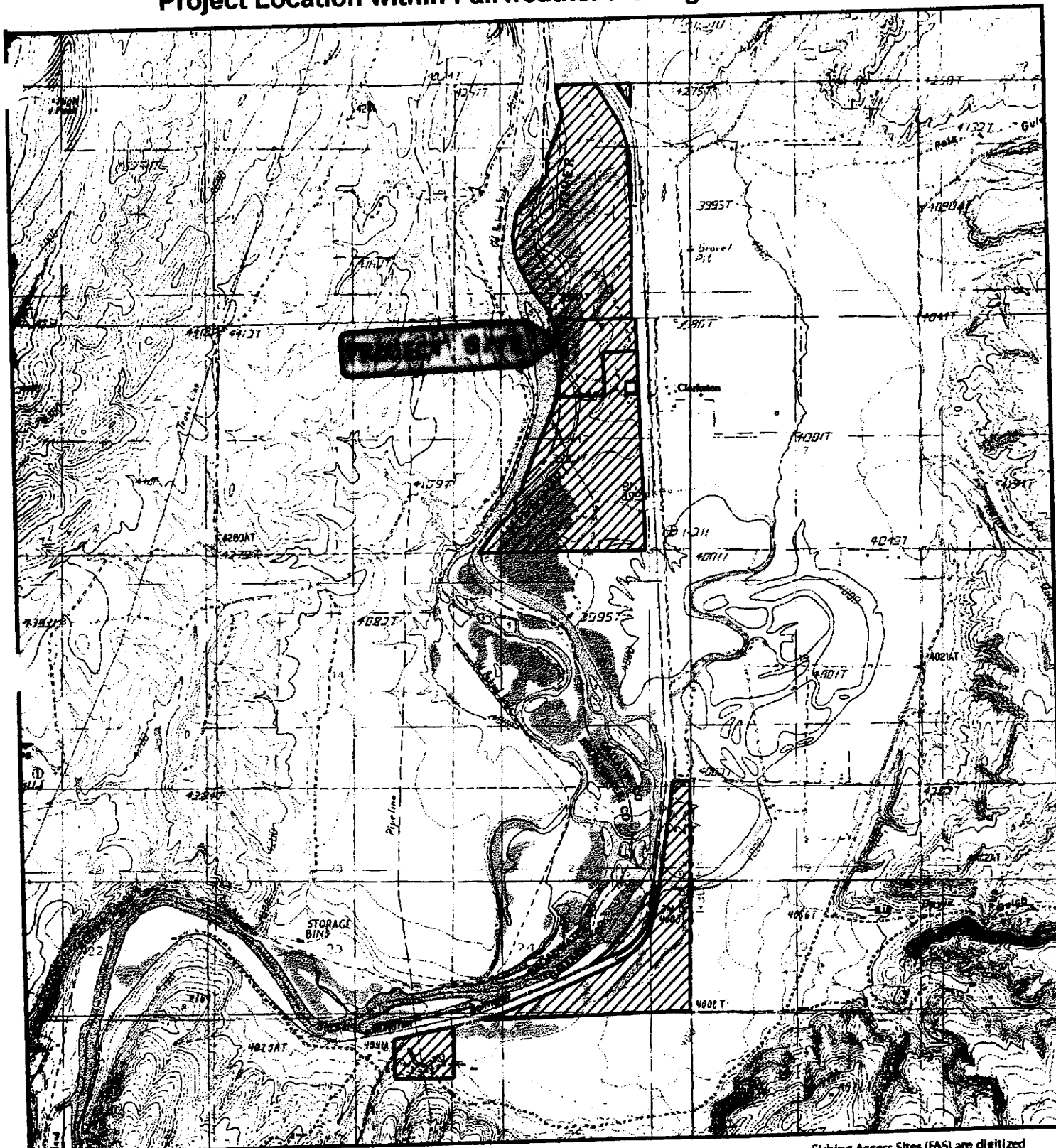
APPENDIX 2 **Site Location Map – Fairweather Fishing Access Area** Gallatin County, Montana; T3N, R2E Entire Site = approximately 719 acres

North

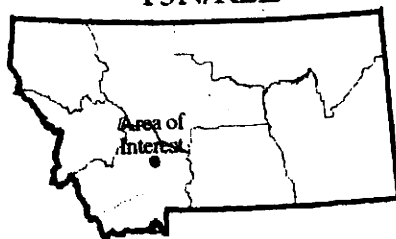


APPENDIX 3

Project Location within Fairweather Fishing Access Area



Lands File Number: 3221
T3N/R2E



718.395 acres



Fee Simple
FAS Parcel

0 2000 4000

Scale in feet
Scale 1:37000

Fishing Access Sites (FAS) are digitized and maintained by the Information Services Unit of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. FAS's were digitized at 1:24,000 using the COGO module of Arc/Info. The background image is a USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle digital raster graphic.



Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks

Map produced by NRIS,
request# 00FWP6 - September 22, 1999

APPENDIX 5
Tourism Report
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
1424 9th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Fairweather Fishing Access Area Reroute

Project Description: Reroute site access road, parking and turn-around culdesac, install gravel boat ramp and latrine.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?

(circle one) NO

YES

If YES, briefly describe:

As described, the Fairweather FAA PROJECT SHOULD improve the quality and safety of public access to the RIVER in this area. The result should be improved user services for residents and visitors.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

(circle one) NO

YES

If YES, briefly describe:

As described, the provide improves both the quality and quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings at Fairweather FAA.

Signature

Victor A. Bjornberg

APPENDIX 6
Clearance Letter



Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks

1420 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, Montana 59620-0701

RECEIVED

JUN 01, 2001

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
DEPT. OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Mr. Mark Baumler
State Historical Preservation Officer
State Historical Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620

RE: Fairweather FAS

May 9, 2001

Dear Mark:

NO PROPERTIES ON OR ELIGIBLE
FOR NRHP APPEAR LIKELY TO
EXIST WITHIN PROJECT IMPACT AREA

MONTANA SHPO

DATE 31 May 2001 SIGNED

The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks is proposing to develop a new access road, parking and river access point at the Fairweather Fishing Access Site, T-3N, R-3E, Sec. 12, Gallatin County. The new development is needed due to the erosion of the previous river access point, we are proposing to move the access point downstream about 400' to a more stable site.

Enclosed are a CRABS Form and a Cultural Resource Inventory Report for this proposed project. Please keep this copy for your review and records. We are in agreement with the findings of this report and believe the proposed project will have a low-likelihood of impacting any known cultural resources.

Please review this project and provide us with your comments.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL D. HORN

Assistant Cultural Resources Coordinator
Design & Construction Bureau
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

c: File 320.3
Attachments

FWP/
FISH

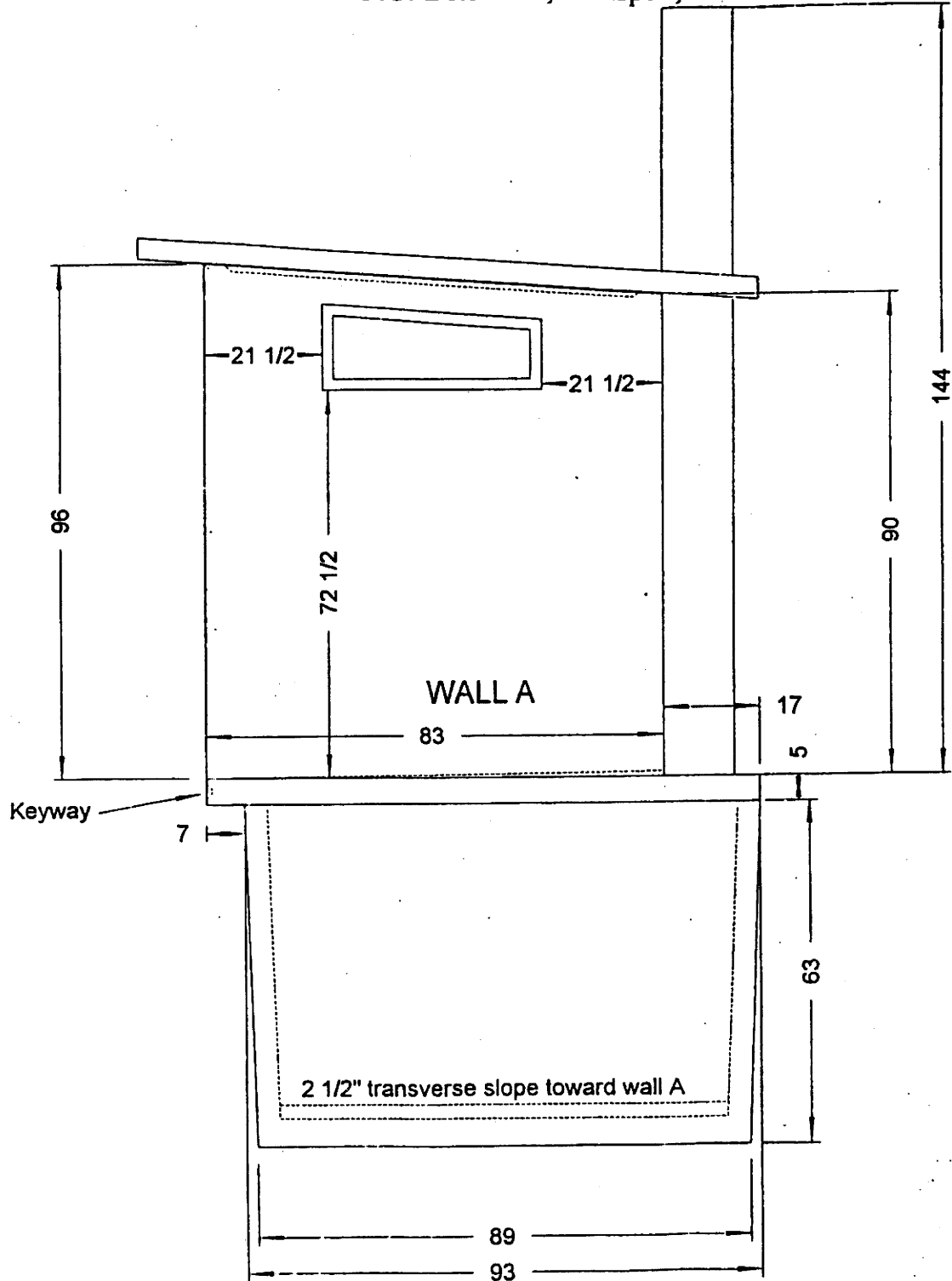
320.3

RECEIVED
BY: _____

APPENDIX 7
Building Plans - Latrine

f Flathead Concrete Products

C 2940 Highway 2 East-Kalispell
p U.S. 93 South-Polson
P.O. Box 5428, Kalispell, Montana 59903-5428

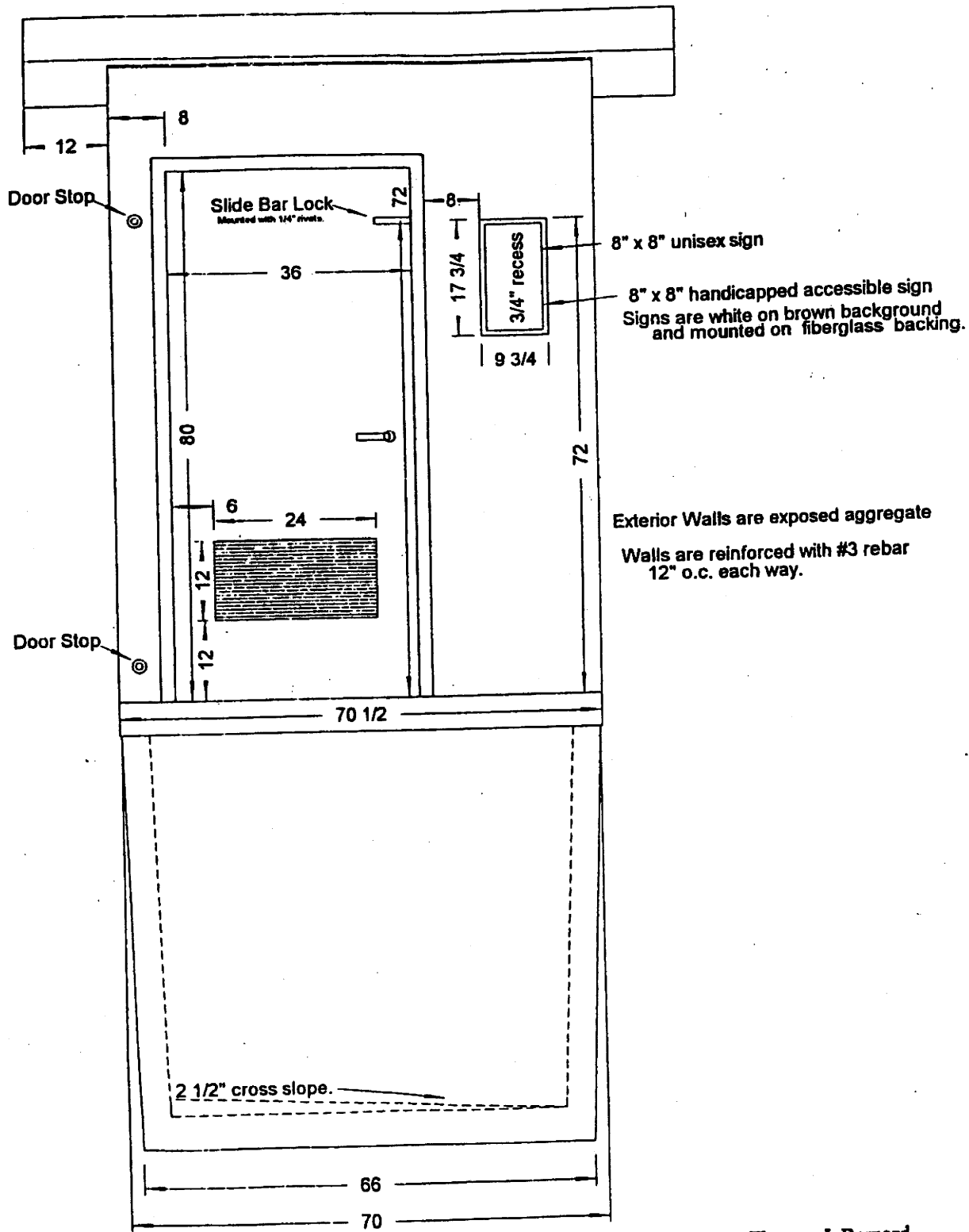


Thomas J. Barnard
Professional Engineer
3578 PE

Wall B is an exact opposite.

file:fwp9

f Flathead Concrete Products
c 2940 Highway 2 East- Kalispell
p US 93 South- Polson
P.O. Box 5428, Kalispell, Montana, 59903-5428



VIEW B

Thomas J. Barnard
Professional Engineer
3578 PE